OVERVIEW

When the placement is safe and, in the child's, best interest, every reasonable effort must be made to maintain the placement. Caseworkers must follow the timeframes and requirements regarding a child's absence from placement in this policy. When it is necessary to have absences there is no change in placement in MiSACWIS.

APPROVED ABSENCES FROM PLACEMENT

The following are reasons for which a child may be approved for an absence from the placement:

Substitute care is short term care and supervision for a foster child in the absence of the caregiver. Substitute care is driven by the caregiver's need for substitute care. The substitute caregiver does not need to be licensed. If the substitute caregiver is licensed, a capacity change does not need to occur.

Parenting time is visits between a child and the child's parents to support reunification and preserve attachment. When reunification is the goal, the parenting time plan should include progressively increased parental contact.

Sibling visits are visits between a child and the child's siblings to support reunification and preserve attachment. Siblings in foster care who are not placed together must have regular visitation.

Pre-adoptive visits are approved visits between a child and a prospective adoptive family to support the transition to the adoptive home. The pre-adoptive family must have an approved adoptive family assessment and does not have to be a licensed caregiver.

Prudent parent absences from the placement are child centered activities that promote normalcy for children. These activities do not have to be with a licensed caregiver and do not require a placement change. If the child is staying with a licensed caregiver, a capacity change does not need to occur.

Note: These will not require placement changes or capacity changes to licensed foster homes.

An approved absence from placement cannot override or interfere with the child's case plan or court-ordered requirements.

Example: Court- ordered requirements such as parenting time and sibling visits.

Notification

Caregiver

The caregiver must notify the caseworker prior to the absence anytime a child will be away from their placement for three or more days. Inform the child's Legal Guardian Ad Litem (LGAL) and parents (for temporary wards) of planned absences.

For absences requiring substitute care for 24 hours or more, caregivers in licensed foster homes must provide notice to the agency before any planned overnight substitute care and/or within 24 hours of any unplanned absence requiring substitute care (R400.12319).

Legal Parent

Give notice to all legal parents for absences exceeding three days. This may be a written notice or notice by phone, which must then be entered into a social work contact in MiSACWIS.

Exception: Family visitation that is otherwise documented in the current visitation plan.

Approval Path for Absences from Placement

Absences for three to five days:

- Do not require further approval beyond the caseworker.

- The placement must be considered intact by the caregiver and return to the placement is planned.

- The caregiver agrees to remain involved with the child and/or the child's family during the absence.

- Payments may continue as long as the placement is maintained for the child and a return to the placement is planned.

- Do not change the child's placement in MiSACWIS.

Absences for six to 14 days:

- Foster care supervisor approval is required for the absence and must be documented in a caseworker contact.

- The placement must be considered intact by the caregiver and return to the placement is planned.

- The caregiver agrees to remain involved with the child and/or the child's family during the absence.

- Payments may continue as long as the placement is maintained for the child and a return to the placement is planned.

- Do not change the child's placement in MiSACWIS.

Absences for 15 consecutive days or more:

- The county director or designee must approve the absence for both Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and private agency supervised cases.

- The caseworker must write a memo to the county director or designee containing the following information:

  ** The reason for the absence from placement.

  ** The location where the child will be staying.

  ** The person who will be responsible for the child while the child is away from the placement.

  ** The caseworker has confirmed with the caregiver that they are willing to accept the child back following the absence.

  ** The caregiver's willingness to continue involvement with the child during the absence.

  ** The planned begin and end date of the absence.

  ** The child's fund source.

Note: If the child's fund source is not title IV-E, the county director/designee may approve payment of the age appropriate rate and the Placement Agency Foster Care (PAFC) general foster care administrative rate, if appropriate.

See [FOM 903-07, Temporary Break/Bed Hold Payments](#) for more information.

Temporary Breaks

See [FOM 903-07, Temporary Breaks/Bed Hold Payments](#) for more information.

Documentation

The caseworker must document approved absences in a case contact in the social work contact in MiSACWIS.

Note: This includes the planned length of the absence(s).

LEGAL AUTHORITY

State Laws

Child Care Organizations Act, 1973 PA 116, as amended, MCL 722.111 et seq.

Foster family home and foster family group home; is care and supervision that is provided 24 hours a day, for four or more days a week, for two or more consecutive weeks.

Licensing Rule

Mich Admin Code, R400.12319

An agency's substitute care policy must support substitute caregivers and childcare licensing rules.

POLICY CONTACT

Questions about this policy item may be directed to [the Child Welfare Policy Mailbox](#).